Calling on his colleagues to put progress before politics, Rep. Peter Welch on Thursday voted against repealing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Welch argued that turning back the clock on the health care reform would take away vital protections for Vermont families while adding $230 billion to the deficit.

The House passed the repeal legislation (H.R. 2) by a vote of 245 to 189.

"Instead of putting political points on the board, we should be focused on achieving practical progress for middle class Americans," Welch said. "Throwing out the essential health care protections we passed last year will materially hurt Vermont families. We must work to improve this law, not scrap it wholesale."

During his remarks on the House floor, Welch shared the story of Donna Watts, a Plainfield, Vt., mother whose son was seriously injured in a car accident prior to the passage of the Affordable Care Act. Because Watts' son did not have access to health insurance through his employer, his family was forced to pay $20,000 in hospital bills when he was injured. Under the new law, Watts' son – and other Vermonters under the age of 26 – could have remained on his parents' health plan.

"Donna told me that one of the most anxiety-inducing experiences for any parent is when you reach the point in your child's life when he or she is no longer eligible for your health insurance coverage," Welch said. "Beyond the politics, beyond the rhetoric, that is what's at stake in this debate."

Welch has been the leader in the House in opposing the repeal efforts and working to make the health care reform more effective. He led the effort to amend the repeal legislation to require up-or-down votes on four key provisions of the bill. Just yesterday, Welch announced legislation he is planning to introduce in the House to let states in 2014 provide better health care at less cost.